

Defense spending bill a winner for southeastern Connecticut

"Multi-year procurement."

Never heard of it? Well, you probably aren't alone. Nevertheless, there is no denying its importance to eastern Connecticut's working families, our region's economy, the nation's taxpayers and our national security both here and abroad.

Last week, Congress passed its annual national defense spending bill, a bill President Bush is soon expected to sign into law. And contained in this legislation is language granting multi-year procurement authority to the U.S. Navy to buy five Virginia-class submarines in bulk - bringing years of work to Groton's own Electric Boat, significant savings to U.S. taxpayers and a versatile ship that is superior to all other vessels with respect to intelligence gathering, covert operations, firepower and stealth.

Those who most benefit from multi-year procurement are the workers at Electric Boat. Before multi-year, workers could only work on a single boat at a single time. Many times, this meant work slowdowns for hundreds of men and women at EB. Now, thanks to multi-year procurement, workers at EB no longer



**Your
View**

*U.S. Rep.
Robert
Simmons*

**'Those who
most benefit
from
multi-year
procurement
are the
workers at
Electric Boat.'**

have to worry about work stoppage - it's on to the next submarine. For the working men and woman, multi-year delivers job security and a stable workload well into the future.

Program stability of a multi-year contract authority also brings the same stability to the region's defense industries and subcontractors. Before multi-year, shipbuilders and suppliers could only count on building one submarine at a time. Soon shipbuilders and sup-

pliers will be able to predict production levels, better manage their workforces and preserve critical skills giving subcontractors the confidence to allow new investment to improve productivity - all because of multi-year procurement.

Multi-year creates substantial cost savings by working on the premise of "buying in bulk." Just as consumers find significant savings when buying products in bulk at BJ's or Sam's Club, multi-year authority allows the Navy to reap similar savings. Instead of ordering one submarine per year over the next five years, the Navy now can order parts and supplies for five during that same period, saving taxpayers as much as \$80 million per ship.

Finally, by speeding up production of the Virginia class, we will be better securing our nation's defense. The Virginia class offers a new platform that carries the most sophisticated torpedoes, mines and Tomahawk cruise missiles.

In addition, this advanced platform has the capacity to launch unmanned undersea vehicles (UUVs) and features Lock-Out/Lock-In chambers for special operations and can carry and launch Special Operations

Forces, a feature never seen on submarines of the past. At the Aug. 16th christening ceremony of the first of this new class, the USS VIRGINIA (SSN-774), the world had its first glimpse of this truly remarkable vessel.

Since coming to Congress in January 2001, I have been a steadfast advocate for multi-year procurement. Getting Congress to go along with the plan, however, has been a long and tortuous process.

Earlier this month, as a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I helped win multi-year approval as part of the proposed defense authorization bill.

Recently, I joined Rep. Jim Langevin, D-R.I., in leading a bipartisan group of members in negotiations with members of the House Appropriations Committee to provide for multi-year contracting authority in this year's defense appropriations bill. The fruits of bipartisanship and hard work have paid off.

After years of painful cuts to our submarine workforce, multi-year procurement will bring much-needed stability while at the same time capturing production efficiencies and ensuring maximum cost

savings.

This "big win" for the U.S. Navy, the American taxpayers, and the working men and women of Electric Boat will strengthen our local economy and ensure that eastern Connecticut proudly remains the submarine capital of the world.

*U.S. Rep. Robert
Simmons, a resident of
Stonington, represents
Connecticut's 2nd congressional district.*